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ABSTRACT

The booklet uses both narrative and line drawings to outline Rough Rock Demonstration School's process of developing a K-12 Navajo language and culture curriculum for Navajo children at Rough Rock and other schools on and off the reservation. There are suggestions for writing the proposal, getting community support, and recruiting staff. The next sections discuss finding out what the community perceives to be its needs and problems (including a sample needs assessment survey), and assessing available native-based curriculum materials. The booklet next discusses developing a philosophy of education, setting up a curriculum model, and translating the needs assessment survey into ideas for curriculum. The sections on developing curriculum content, scope and sequence, and writing teacher objectives are followed by a sample fourth grade social studies program. The booklet ends with suggestions for implementation of the curriculum, evaluation, and working with others. A summary of the Rough Rock Community-Teacher-Student survey (with recommendations for curriculum development) is included. (CM)

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Developing Culture Curriculum For Native American Children

The Rough Rock Experience

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ROUGH ROCK DEMONSTRATION SCHOOL
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Rough Rock, Arizona

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DEVELOPING CULTURE CURRICULUM FOR NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN: THE ROUGH ROCK EXPERIENCE

....a step-by-step, illustrated guide to curriculum development

Produced by

The Materials Development Staff
Gene Johnson-Fred Bia-Teresa McCarty-Regina Lynch

Rough Rock Demonstration School
Rough Rock, Arizona

Introduction

by Gene Johnson

The Navajo people, the Diné, have strong traditional beliefs in many things that they do, say, and in the things put on the earth for people to use. For this reason, Navajo people for many generations have lived in harmony with nature. They believe that almost everything on earth was given to them by their Creator, and it is there for them to use, in harmony.

The Navajo also believe that everything on the earth -- plants, animals, rain and sunshine -- was given to them in pairs of two, a male and a female. It is believed by the Navajo that this is so because as these things are used, they will always reproduce.

The early Navajos held beliefs about good and bad things, and these beliefs were practiced traditionally. Recently, some of those traditional beliefs have slowly started to fade farther and farther away. This has resulted in the extinction of some early beliefs, ceremonies and traditional stories.

In the last 30 years, some concerned Navajos began to realize what was happening to their culture and traditional beliefs. They became concerned with the future of their children and grandchildren, and began asking themselves, "What is happening to us and our children? What can we do? Our children ask us questions about their culture and their identity, and about their history. They are asking questions which we cannot answer, and we as parents seem to have no one to turn to for answers."

Many of us as parents, and our children, supposedly became well educated in the Anglo culture and society, at their schools, colleges and universities. Meanwhile, many of our children cannot speak or understand their native language, don't know their clan, and cannot identify their relationship with other clans. These things were a very important part of traditional Navajo life.

Many of our young people drifted so far away from traditional beliefs and practices, that they began to deny them, and picked up Christian concepts and beliefs. They began to ridicule their people's way of life — some even went so far as burning and destroying their family's sacred items, such as the sacred soil bundle of the Holy Mountain, the Holy Life Feather, and corn pollen. These things were always sacred to the Navajo, and have traditionally been used for ceremonial rituals to cure illness.

Some young people lost respect for the sacred ceremonies, and thought of them only as week-end activities, like a rodeo or a modern American dance — a place to have fun and get drunk. Lack of respect for oneself, others, and harmony with nature -- what Navajos call k'e -- was becoming lost. Who was to blame?

Recognizing these problems, some concerned Navajos began to realize that it is important for Navajo children to have a solid education in the Navajo language and way of life, as well as the survival skills to exist and make a living in the Anglo society. These concerned Navajos began to look back over their history, while at the same time looking at our people today and our children's future. They asked themselves, "Where did we come from and where are we going?"

These Navajos then realized that they were living on holy land, with the four sacred mountains in four directions. They knew they were meant to have a way of life which was exclusively for Navajos -- but many Navajos had begun to ignore this.

Even though many of us have become awakened to the situation, the question still remains: Who can we depend upon to teach our children their native language and culture? How can we see that our children are taught those things that have almost been lost, and some that may be gone forever?

This is where such schools as the Rough Rock Demonstration School come into the picture. At Rough Rock we have bilingual-bicultural education, with Navajo language and culture instruction and native Navajo teachers who are daily engaged in teaching young children about their way of life, their culture, language and history. This is not an easy job, because native language and culture teachers need somewhere to turn for resources. Unlike regular classroom teachers, native language and culture teachers have very few available curriculum materials to work with. The few materials available are not organized into an integrated, scoped and sequenced curriculum, and many teachers do not know how to use these materials. In short, although there may be a few materials available to teach Navajo and other Native American studies, these materials have not been placed into a structured and integrated curriculum perspective.

Recently, the Rough Rock School was given a three-year grant from Title IV-B, to accomplish this goal. Our project -- called the "Materials Development Project" -- is charged with putting together all existing materials on Navajo language and culture

and determining what needs exist in developing an overall, scoped and sequenced curriculum for Navajo Studies, grades K-12. In these three years, we will also be developing new materials to "fill in the gaps" where no materials exist. The end product of our endeavors, we hope, will be a complete K-12 Navajo-based language and culture curriculum for Navajo children at Rough Rock and other schools on and off the reservation.

That is what this booklet is about -- the process of developing a native culture-based curriculum, as we have experienced it at Rough Rock. We realize that this process will be different for different schools and communities, depending on their individual needs and culture. We hope, however, that others will be able to take parts of our curriculum model and adapt them to their own particular situation. We also hope that by sharing our experiences with other educators and curriculum developers, we will be able to grow and learn from each other.

Acknowledgements

In addition to the four project staff members (Gene Johnson, Coordinator, Teresa McCarty, Curriculum Specialist; Fred Bia, Materials Developer; Regina Lynch, Secretary/Editorial Assistant), our project includes an Advisory Committee which acts as a steering and evaluation group to guide the project throughout the three years. The Committee is comprised of three parents, two traditionalists (medicine men), one administrator, one teacher and two students. We would like to thank especially, Mrs. Hasbah Charley, Mrs. Anita Bahe, Mrs. Katherine Sells, Ms. Sarafina Begay and Mr. Teddy Draper, for their continuous support of our work on the project.

We would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance given to us by members of the school's Navajo Resource Center staff, in particular, Mrs. Ruth Roessel, Mr. Alfred Yazzie and Mr. Frank Isaac, and by other curriculum developers on and off the Navajo Reservation. Steve Wallace, Caryl McHarney, Steve Thayer, Louise Benally and Director Jay DeGroat of the Native American Materials Development Center (NAMDC) in Albuquerque, have also guided much of the direction of our project. Their input is gratefully acknowledged and appreciated.

This project would not have been possible without the guidance and input of Mr. Norman Eck and Dr. Robert Roessel, who wrote the proposal and saw the project through its initial months. For the insights and strength provided by these individuals, we are very grateful.

Finally, the community members, teachers and students at Rough Rock have greatly assisted us in targeting curriculum needs. It is for these individuals that our work is dedicated; without their interest, ideas and cooperation, this project could not succeed.

I. Writing the Proposal
Getting Community Support
Getting Staff On Board

As we all know, the first step in beginning any project, is to answer the questions: "Why?" "What?" "How?" and "Where?"

Why is a native curriculum needed?

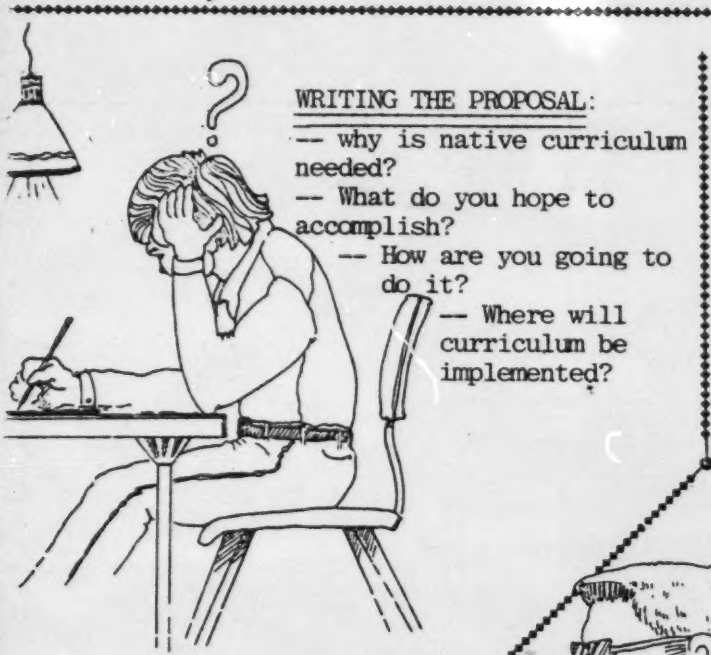
What do you hope to accomplish?

How are you going to do it?

Where will the curriculum be implemented?

Secondly, you have to make others aware of your answers to these questions, and seek their advice on answering these questions. You need to get the support of your community, your school board, and administrators. If you begin the curriculum development process with this support, you have a solid foundation.

Equally important after taking this initial step, however, is recruiting a team -- not just qualified and professional people, but qualified professionals who can work together in a team effort, and who are committed to the goals of the project. In our case, that team is composed of a Project Coordinator, a Curriculum Specialist, Materials Developer, and a Secretary/ Editorial Assistant.



WRITING THE PROPOSAL:

-- why is native curriculum needed?

-- What do you hope to accomplish?

-- How are you going to do it?

-- Where will curriculum be implemented?

GETTING COMMUNITY & SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT

GETTING STAFF ON-BOARD

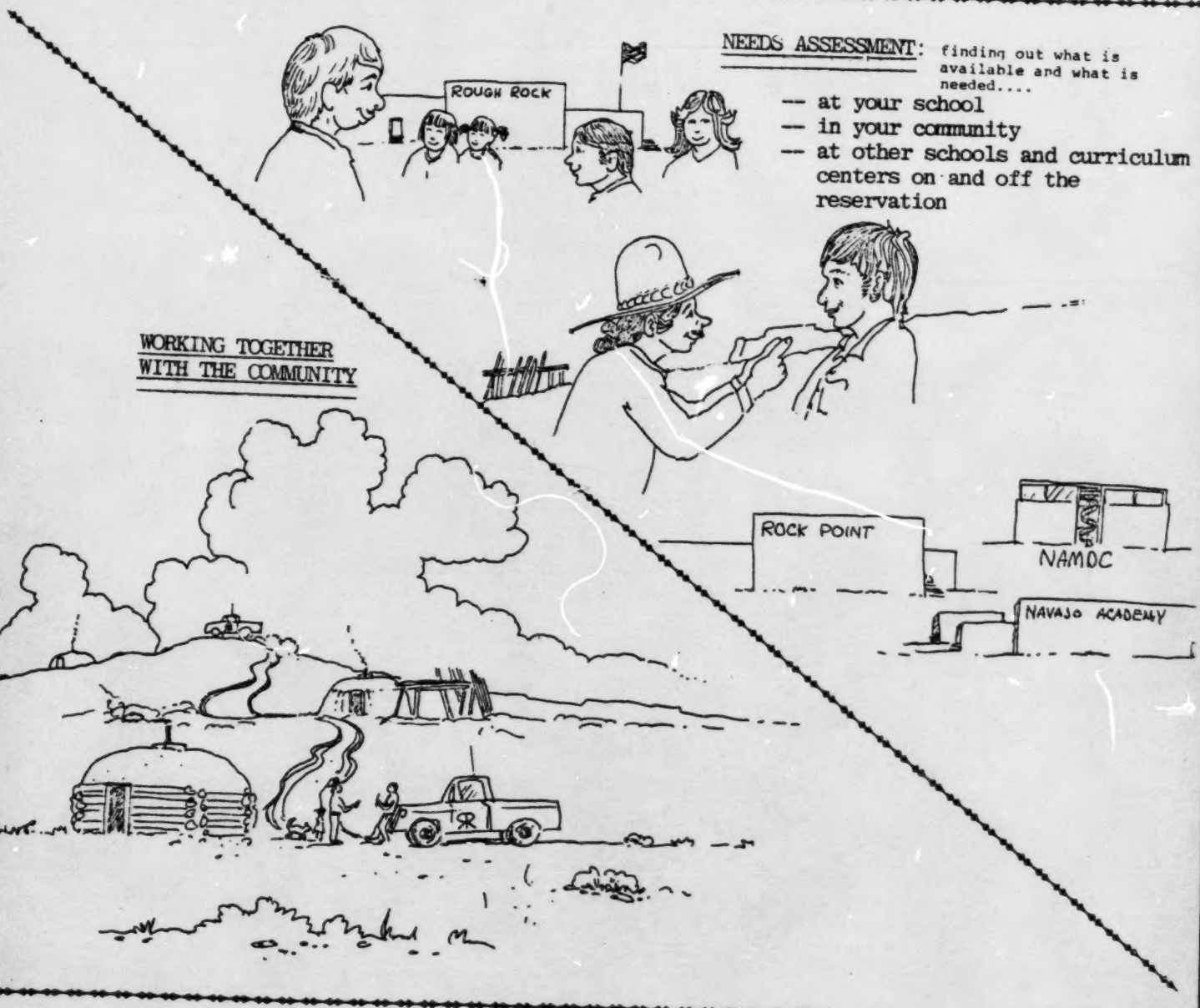
II. Needs Assessment

Working Together With the Community

Once you have this foundation to work with, the first stage in curriculum development involves two things:

1) Finding out what native culture-based curriculum materials are already available, and where the "gaps" are; and

2) Finding out what the community perceives to be its needs and problems which you, as a curriculum developer, can address.


ROUGH ROCK
NEEDS ASSESSMENT: finding out what is available and what is needed....
-- at your school
-- in your community
-- at other schools and curriculum centers on and off the reservation
WORKING TOGETHER WITH THE COMMUNITY
ROCK POINT
NAMOC
NAVAJO ACADEMY

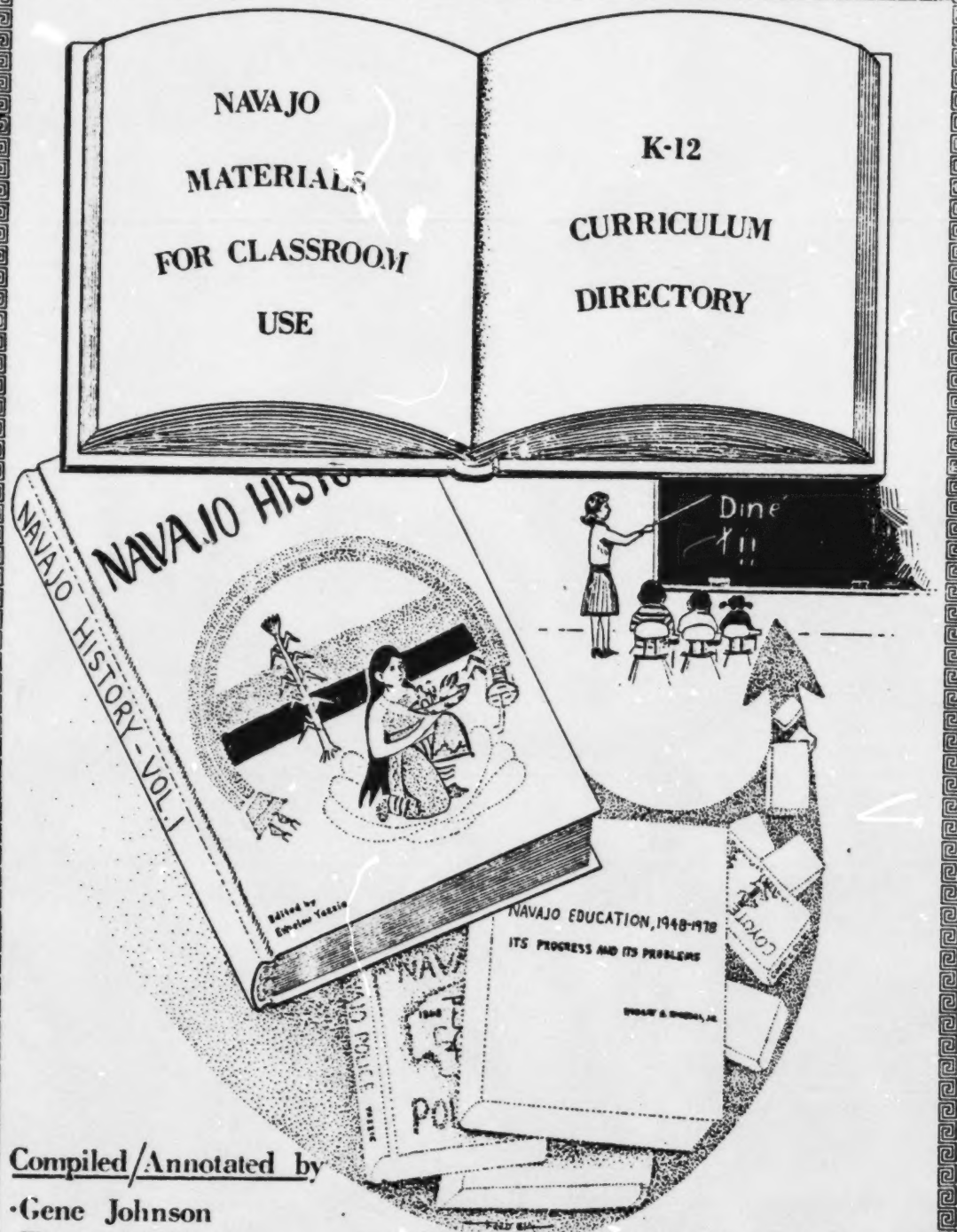
III. Assessing Available Materials and Resources

To answer the first question, we went to other schools and curriculum developers, on and off the Navajo Reservation, to find out what Navajo materials had already been developed and where they could be located.

We then compiled a bibliography of all available Navajo curriculum materials and teacher resources.

NAVAJO MATERIALS FOR CLASSROOM USE

K-12 CURRICULUM DIRECTORY



Compiled/Annotated by

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- Teresa McCarty
- Fred Bia
- Regina Lynch

MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Navajo Curriculum Center
Rough Rock Demonstration School

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IV. Surveying Community, Teachers & Students at Rough Rock & Elsehwere

To answer the second question, we consulted first with teachers and students at Rough Rock. We asked them what curriculum materials they were using, what they thought they needed, and what they liked or didn't like about the present Navajo Studies program.

Then we went outside the school to talk to community members, medicine men, and people at other schools and curriculum development centers on and off the reservation. We asked these people:

"What are the major problems in Navajo society today?"

"What do Navajo students need to know to solve these problems in the future?"

The answers to these questions gave us an idea of where to begin with our curriculum.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR COMMUNITY, SCHOOL & OTHER CURRICULUM DEVELOPERS

1) What are the major problems of Navajo society today?

2) What qualities do Navajos need to solve these problems?

3) What do students today need to learn to solve these problems?

4) What do Navajo students need to learn for self-fulfillment and development?

5) Do you think some of these problems can be solved with community input? If so, how?

6) Are today's schools working to solve modern problems on and off the Navajo Reservation? If so, how?

7) Do you think it's important to teach Navajo Studies? Why or why not?

8) What kind of Navajo things should be taught? What shouldn't be taught?

9) Who should teach Navajo culture in the schools?

10) What are some of the strenghts of current Navajo language and culture programs? What are some weaknesses?

V. Developing a Philosophy of Education
Setting Up a Curriculum Model

As you receive input from the community, you will begin to develop a philosophy of education and bilingual-bicultural curriculum development.

The philosophy is the basis for a needs-specific curriculum model -- a guideline for developing actual materials.

Our model is derived from two sources, one belonging to the Navajo society, and one belonging to the Anglo society.

The first source is a combination of the Rough Rock School's philosophy, and native Navajo philosophy. Both of these philosophies stress the importance of a child's growth as a whole person -- a person who understands himself and his culture, and who respects others. This philosophy requires a knowledge of Navajo language and culture. (When we speak of culture as it is taught in the classroom, we refer only to non-sacred things.) The Navajo philosophy also requires that the teacher of Navajo culture be someone who is knowledgeable and concerned with Navajo culture. This philosophy is represented in the Navajo cradleboard, basket and cornstalk.

Our second source for a curriculum model comes from Anglo educators and curriculum developers -- in particular, the work of Hilda Taba.* Taba's approach emphasizes the importance of culture and asking questions in the learning process. She stresses that a curriculum should be composed of ideas and concepts, not "just facts." Taba says these ideas and concepts should spiral from one learning level to the next.

Taba's approach coincides well with the traditional Navajo way of teaching. We adapted Taba's approach to meet our needs at Rough Rock -- and came up with a curriculum model that is culture-based and inquiry-based.

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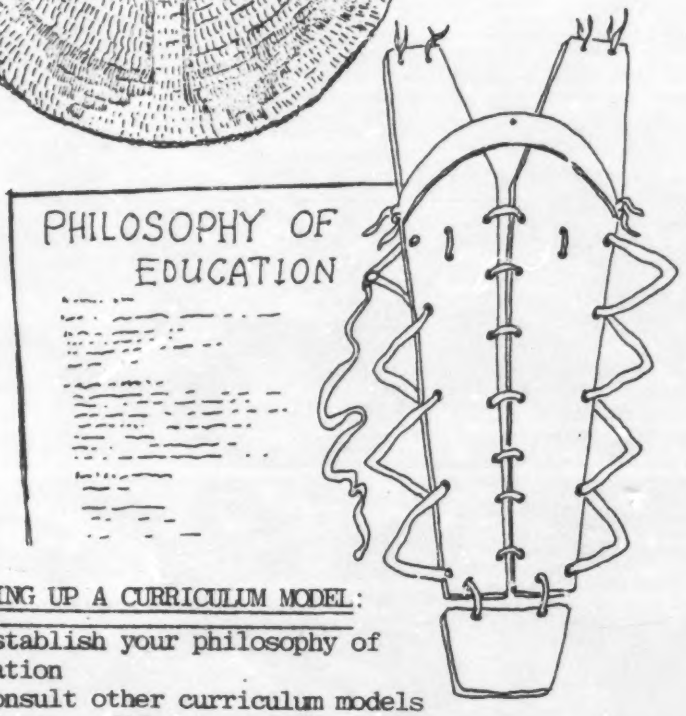
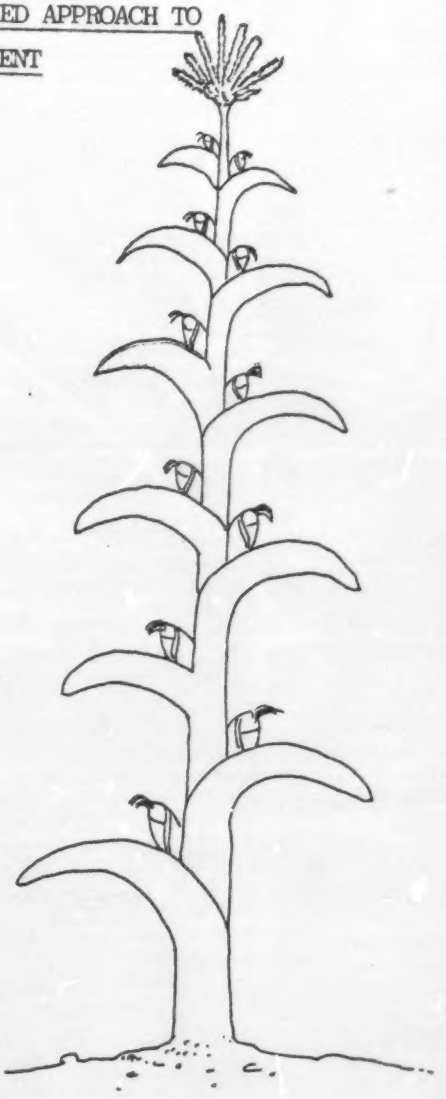
*For more information, see Hilda Taba, Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice. N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. (1962).

A CULTURE-BASED, INQUIRY-BASED APPROACH TO CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT





SETTING UP A CURRICULUM MODEL:

— establish your philosophy of education
— consult other curriculum models
— adapt, modify, innovate a model to meet your philosophy and needs

VI. Translating Needs Assessment Survey Into Ideas for Curriculum

Armed with a curriculum model and the responses of teachers, students and administrators about needs and problems, we began to translate this into a plan for curriculum development.

The chart on the following page shows the steps in this translation.

We first listed the most common problems -- both in Navajo society as a whole, and at our school -- noted by community members, teachers, students and others who participated in our survey.

Based on those problems, we then identified the type of individuals our schools need to produce, in order to solve the problems. In addition, we listed school-related activities which might assist in solving some of the problems.

Finally, we transformed the problems and needs in columns 1-3, into ideas for curriculum development. We asked:

"What kinds of concepts and ideas do students need to learn to become problem solvers in modern Navajo society?"

"What kinds of skills must Navajo students master?"

"What subject matter can we use to teach these ideas, concepts and skills?"

"What method shall we use to teach Navajo students?"

SUMMARY OF ROUGH ROCK COMMUNITY-TEACHER-STUDENT
SURVEY WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

MAJOR PROBLEMS IN NAVAJO SOCIETY & AT ROUGH ROCK, NOTED BY TEACHERS, STUDENTS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS		TYPE(S) OF PEOPLE NEEDED TO SOLVE PROBLEMS	TYPE OF CURRICULUM TO BE DEVELOPED, BASED ON PROBLEM AREAS NOTED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS			
Problems In Society	Problems At School		Concepts/Ideas	Skill Areas	Subject Matter	Methodology
Individuals unprepared to live in bilingual/ bicultural world	Students have inadequate bilingual/ bicultural skills	Individuals with bilingual/ bicultural knowledge & skills	Economics, sociology of Navajo & Anglo societies	Literacy in Navajo & English	Navajo & English languages	Bilingual/ bicultural instruction
Lack of understanding of Navajo values (k'e)	Students do not understand Navajo values & philosophy (k'e)	Individuals who retain and can pass on strong Navajo values	k'e, responsibility, cooperation; Navajo way of life, past & present	Bicultural survival skills	Cultural "do's & dont's"	Utilize elderly Navajo consultants to teach "do's & don'ts"
Lack of self-respect/cultural identity conflicts	Lack of bilingual/ bicultural teaching staff	Individuals with positive self-identity, sense of responsibility; trained bilingual/ bicultural teachers	self-awareness, respect for self & others; assertiveness; self-reliance	Ability to plan, exercise self-discipline	Kinship & clanship; Navajo history; contemporary Navajo society & problems; Navajo government	Team-teaching (pair Navajo and Anglo teachers)
Joblessness	Students bored & uninterested in curriculum; lack of sequential Navajo curriculum	Individuals with skills to compete in job markets on & off reservation	Career opportunities; how to prepare today for a job tomorrow; perserverence	Self-discipline; responsibility; ability to plan	Vocational education; history of Navajo education	Team-teaching; utilize Navajo consultants for career education
Disruption of family & marital life; lack of family values	Students do not know their clan; parents uninvolved in students' education; need for increased communication between school & parents	Individuals who retain strong family values; individuals who can and will become involved in school	Kinship, clanship, k'e; cooperation; communication; responsibility	Homemaking, animal husbandry; ability to cooperate; communication skills	Cooking, weaving, care of hogan, bread-making animal husbandry	Pair elderly consultants with younger Navajo individuals in classroom discussion
Drinking, drugs, violence	Drinking, drugs, violence	Individuals who can cope in bilingual/ bicultural world without resorting to drugs, violence	self-awareness; respect for self & others (k'e); consequences of drinking, drugs, violence	Survival & coping skills in bilingual/ bicultural situations	Drug/sex/ health education; Navajo culture & values	Team-teaching; pair elderly with younger consultants

VII. Developing Curriculum Content

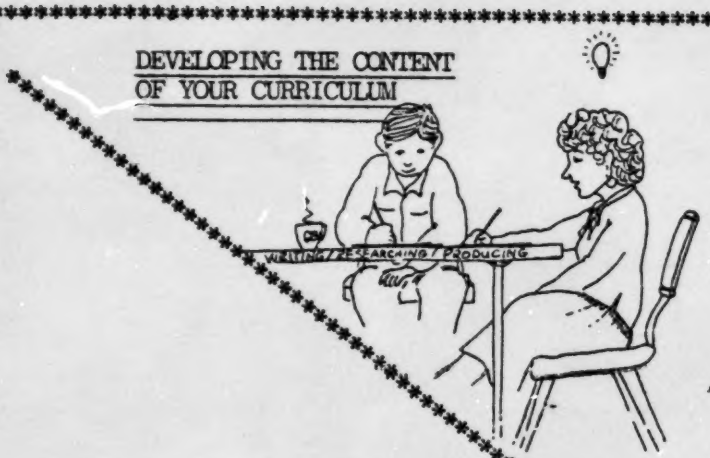
Scope and Sequence

Writing Teacher Objectives

At this point, we began developing the actual content of a Navajo culture curriculum. The first step at this stage is outlining a scope and sequence for K-12. The scope and sequence tells you what to teach, when--or how certain concepts, ideas and curriculum content will spiral from one grade level to the next. Outlining a scope and sequence and then developing the actual content of material to be taught, is perhaps the most creative stage of the curriculum development process.

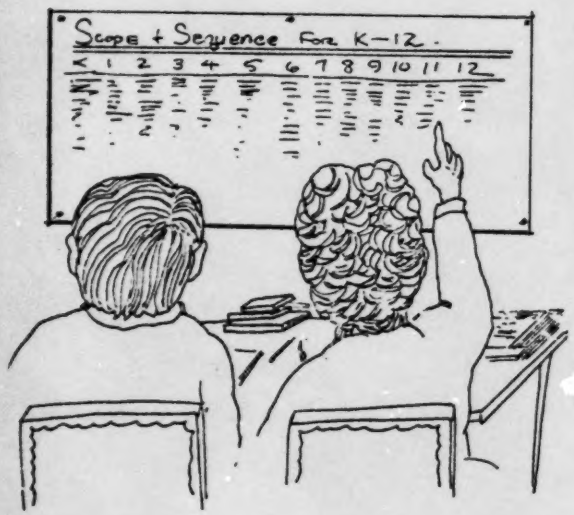
The second aspect of this stage is writing teacher objectives to accompany the curriculum. Objectives should be specific enough so that teachers are able to evaluate students' performance in accomplishing objectives.

DEVELOPING THE CONTENT OF YOUR CURRICULUM



OUTLINING A SCOPE & SEQUENCE:

-- What concepts and skills do you want to teach (based on needs assessment)?
-- How will concepts and skills spiral from each grade level?
-- What subject matter will you use to teach concepts and skills?



WRITING TEACHER OBJECTIVES:

-- goals to be accomplished in each unit
-- goals to be accomplished over entire course

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VIII. Outlining a Scope and Sequence

A scope and sequence indicates what concepts, ideas, skills and content are to be taught, when. Our K-6 scope and sequence begins with the basic concept of self and self-awareness. This concept is reinforced throughout the six grade levels. In this curriculum framework, the Navajo child is encouraged first to know him or herself as an individual (my body, my health, my five senses), and then as an individual who is part of many, larger units (my family, my natural environment, my community). The final stages in the scope and sequence place the child within the context of the Navajo people and more broadly, Native Americans.

Throughout the scope and sequence, other concepts and skills are introduced and reinforced. Our curriculum stresses the concepts of cooperation, sharing, inter-dependence, respect and responsibility. In addition, Navajo history is used to teach the concepts of change, cause and effect, and tradition. By the end of the sixth level, the child has shaped a self-identity as an individual, as a member of a family and clan, and as part of a group of people who have developed, changed and adapted to other people and the environment over many generations.

A K-6 CONCEPTUAL SCOPE AND SEQUENCE FOR NAVAJO STUDIES

(Developed by the Materials Development Project Staff, Rough Rock Demonstration School, and the Curriculum Staff of the Native American Materials Development Center, Albuquerque, N.M., Feb. '81)

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KINDERGARTEN	1st GRADE	2nd GRADE	3rd GRADE	4th GRADE	5th GRADE	6th GRADE
Basic concept: "SELF-AWARENESS"	Basic concept: "ME & OTHERS"	Basic concept: "ME & OTHERS IN OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT"	Basic concept: "ME & OTHERS IN OUR MAN-MADE ENVIRONMENT" (Our Community)	Basic concept: "PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH TIME"	Basic concept: "NAVAJO PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH TIME"	Basic concept: "INDIAN PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGH TIME"
Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:	Supplemental Concepts:
me & my immediate family, my body & health, my five senses	me, my family, my clan (all viewed through "self")	inter-dependence, working together, sharing natural resources, respect for others and environment)	people working together in a man-made environment (our community); reinforce concepts of inter-dependence, sharing, cooperation, respect, responsibility	reinforce concepts of people working togther in natural & man-made environments; introduce concept of working together through time, past events lead to present conditions, change, modification, cause & effect, tradition	Navajo people working together through time; Navajo natural & man-made environments; widen concepts of self & others to include tribe as whole; reinforce concepts of tradition, Navajo tribal history	Indian people working together through time; relationship of Navajo to other tribes, through time, "me" as a part of a larger community of native peoples

IX. Organizing the Content of a Culture-Based Curriculum

The format shown below has been used by the curriculum staff at Rough Rock, and by the Native American Materials Development Center in Albuquerque, in developing social studies curriculum for Navajo children. The particular sample on this page shows the major outline for generating curriculum on a fourth grade social studies program entitled, "Me and My Community Through Time." Definitions of the terms used in this sample are provided on the following page.

* *

4TH GRADE SCOPE & SEQUENCE

Navajo Social Studies

TOPIC: Inter-relationship of self, nature, and community through time.

KEY CONCEPTS:
cause and effect (how things came to be the way they are today)
communication
cooperating with others
interdependence of individuals on one another
change/modification
tradition

MAIN IDEA(S):
When different cultures meet, both are changed.
When new ideas are introduced, our community changes.

ORGANIZING IDEAS:
1) people change when new ideas are introduced
2) people meet new people because of economic needs

CONTENT SAMPLES:
1) history of transportation on Navajo Reservation
2) history of trading on Navajo Reservation
3) history of livestock use on Navajo Reservation

SKILL AREAS:
1) map and globe skills
2) language skills (e.g., Navajo place names, terms used for early traders, names given to other tribes, etc.)
3) music skills (children learn Navajo traveling songs, songs about other Indian tribes, songs about traders)
4) cognitive, "thinking" skills (generalizing, synthesizing knowledge, formulating ideas, etc.)

OBJECTIVES: (Example: "By the end of this study unit, students will be able to state and elaborate four changes that occurred in the role of the trader on the Navajo Reservation between 1875 and 1981.")

FORMAT FOR DEVELOPING NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE CURRICULUM

(Prepared by the Materials Development Project Staff, Navajo Curriculum Center, Rough Rock School, and NAMDC)

I. TOPIC

What is the overall subject matter to be taught at this grade level?

II. KEY CONCEPTS

What are the primary abstract thoughts you want students to be able to generalize from particular lessons?

III. MAIN IDEAS

A main idea is one that comes from drawing relationships between concepts. Main ideas are for teachers rather than students -- teachers and curriculum writers use them as the "backbone" of the curriculum.

IV. ORGANIZING IDEAS

Organizing ideas ask the question: "What kinds of ideas do you want students to be able to generalize from the main idea?" A year's curriculum unit should include about 2-4 organizing ideas. Organizing ideas are for students rather than teachers -- students should be able to state these ideas by the end of the study unit.

V. CONTENT SAMPLES

What is the particular subject matter -- facts contained in lessons -- that you will use to teach your main ideas and concepts?

VI. SKILL AREAS

What particular skills do you want students to have by the end of the study unit? Social studies skill areas include thinking skills (ability to define, list, group, generalize, synthesize knowledge, etc.), map and globe skills, and skills in the areas of values and attitudes.

VII. OBJECTIVES

What are the specific objectives and goals teachers can hope to accomplish by the end of this study unit?

X. Implementation of the Curriculum

Evaluation

Working Continuously With Others

Finally, once you have created your curriculum materials and had them produced, they are ready to go into the classroom. This involves more than just placing materials in teachers' hands. Curriculum developers must work with teachers, training them in the proper use of materials and seeking their ideas on how materials can be improved and made more effective. Materials must be pilot tested, and later, evaluated and revised.

It is important to emphasize that throughout this process, from the initial stage of making a needs assessment, curriculum developers are working constantly with parents, teachers, the community, and other curriculum developers. A brief review of the process so far:

1) Writing the proposal and establishing goals.

2) Getting the support of your community and school board.

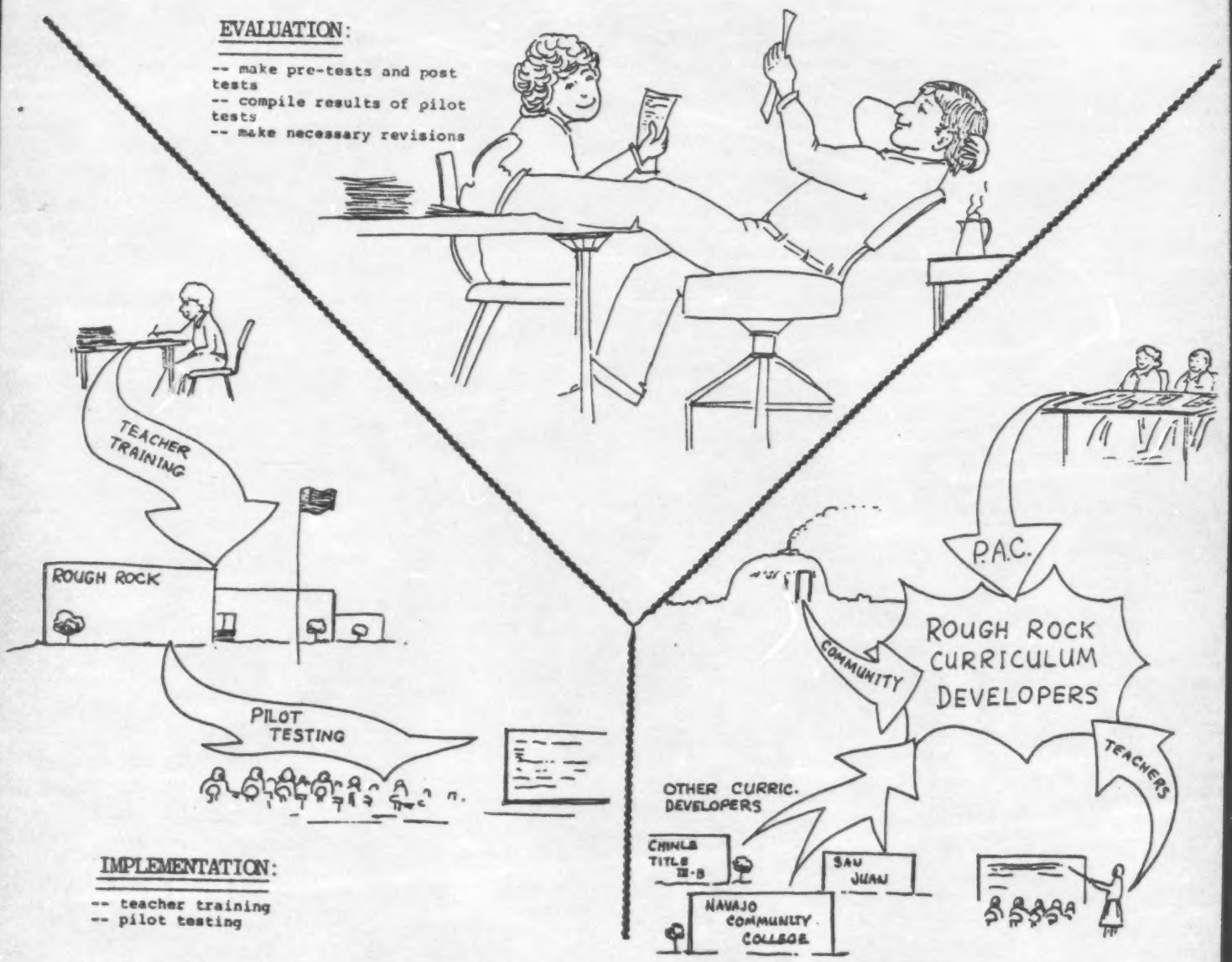
3) Making a needs assessment to determine:
   a) what materials are available and what new materials should be developed;
   b) what your community, teachers, students and other educators perceive to be curriculum development needs.

4) Stating your philosophy of education, and establishing a curriculum model based on this philosophy.

5) Translating needs assessment results into ideas for curriculum development. ("What kinds of curricula do our children need to become effective problem solvers?")

6) Outlining what to teach, when (scope and sequence); creating the content of your curriculum based on scope and sequence.

7) Teacher training, pilot testing, evaluation.



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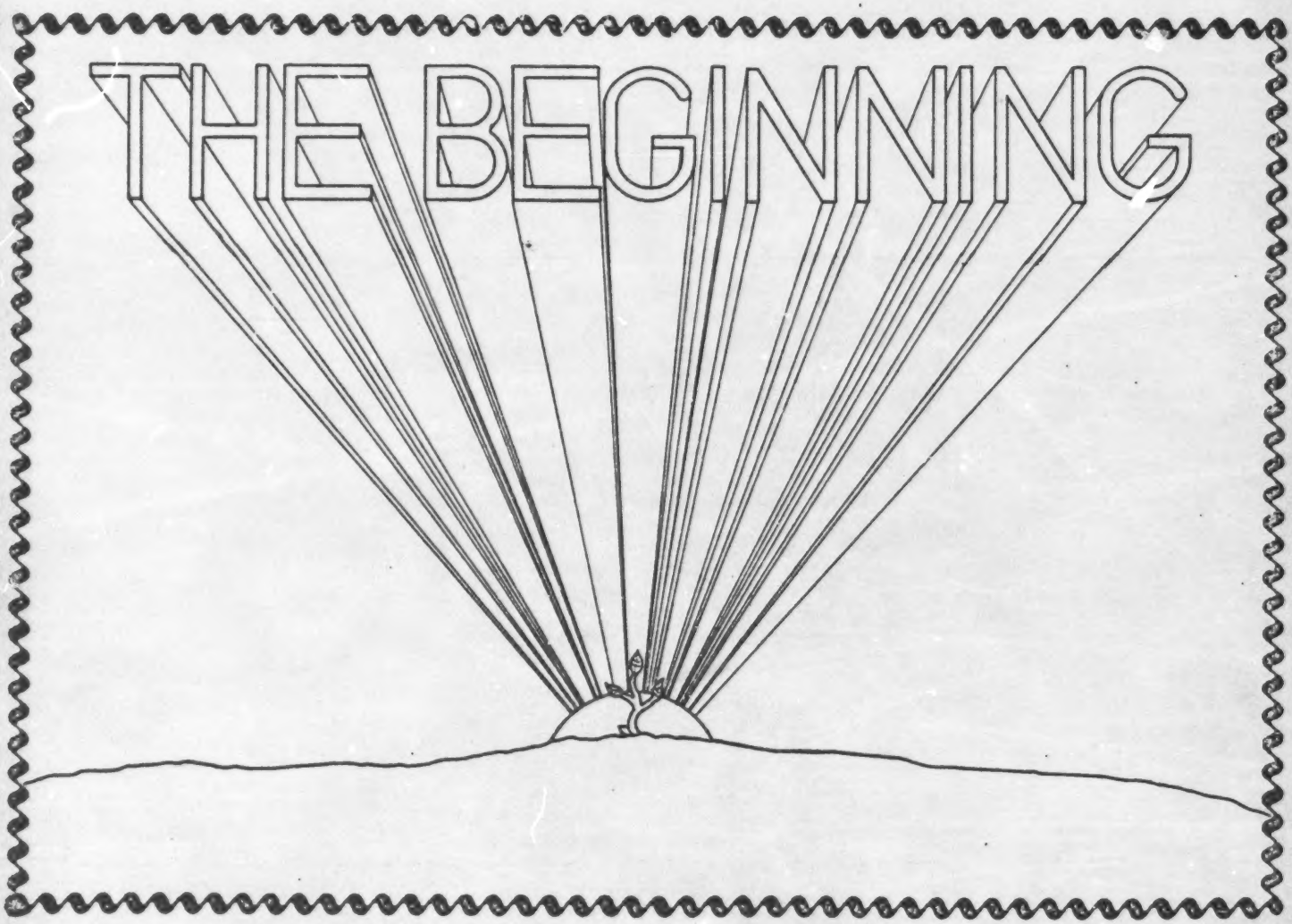
X. "The Beginning"

The Rough Rock experience has shown that curriculum development is a never-ending process, and one that has only begun to demonstrate results for Navajo children. The changing needs and problems of Navajo and American society dictate new educational experiences for students who will some day face these problems.

A culture-based curriculum must continually be revised, modified and adapted to equip Native American students with the problem-solving skills necessary to function effectively, and meaningfully, in a bilingual-bicultural setting.



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